



News from

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In Fighting Terrorism, Time is Not on Our Side

By Congressman Ron Kind

Last month, the bipartisan 9/11 Commission released its unanimous report. The commission has done extraordinary work to identify institutional problems with our intelligence system and to make sound recommendations for how to strengthen our ability to prevent terrorist attacks. Now that we have those recommendations, we should not waste any time moving forward in a bipartisan fashion to secure the safety of our citizens.

Because time is of the essence, I made the case to for Congress to return to work during the August district work period to move forward with intelligence reform. Over the next few weeks, both the House and Senate will hold a series of committee hearings so that we are prepared to consider reform measures when we convene again in September.

What the commission's report emphasizes, and what the White House and Congress need to address, is how a failure to recognize the national security threat posed by Al Qaeda, as well as a failure in the capabilities and willingness to share information within the intelligence community, led to our vulnerability.

I believe we need to be more creative and imaginative in regard to our vulnerabilities, and we need to concentrate our intelligence information so can better anticipate attacks before they occur. It is also imperative to refocus our efforts on defeating international terrorist networks such as al-Qaeda, and to work more with the international community to address the hostility in the Arab and Muslim world.

The commission has specifically called for a reorganization of domestic intelligence programs within the F.B.I. It supports a single official at the White House to coordinate the work of the 15 intelligence agencies and determine their budgets, an interagency counterterrorism center to absorb the smaller antiterrorism center operated by the C.I.A., and changes in the way Congress oversees the intelligence community.

With the 9/11 Report, the commission has provided us with a blueprint for action. We have the strength as a nation to do what must be done. The only thing we don't have is time. We must act on the commission's recommendations sooner rather than later and keep working until we have done everything possible to refocus our efforts on defeating international terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, to strengthen our intelligence capabilities and to protect our homeland from another terrorist attack. America cannot wait any longer.

As we go forward, we cannot afford partisanship in how we discuss the safety of the American people, nor can we afford to delay the decisions that we make in the Congress to minimize the risks associated with terrorism. I hope my colleagues in Congress will embrace the recommendations in the commission report in a bipartisan way so we can quickly make the changes needed to better enhance the security and safety of our citizens. Given the worldwide threat of terror and al Qaeda's reconstituted strength, I believe time is of the essence.

We owe it to the families of the victims of 9/11, and to all Americans who live daily with the overhanging threat of terrorism, to use this report to focus our efforts, improve our security, and ensure that this type of attack never happens again.

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